

**Rep. Joel Kretz**

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- Appropriations Subcommittee on  
General Government & Audit Review
- State Government & Tribal Affairs

# Representative **Joel Kretz**

**7th Legislative District**

## 2008 Legislative Review

### *Working for Washington*

Dear friends and neighbors,

It was an honor to represent you again this year in Olympia. The 60-day session passed quickly with almost 3,000 bills introduced and 335 passed. As always, constituent feedback, phone calls and e-mails on issues helped me decide which bills to support and oppose.

The session several few critical 7<sup>th</sup> District successes, such as defeating the proposed Yukon to Yellowstone wildlife corridor bill and passing the "cougar bill" extending the hunting pilot program. There were also some missed opportunities on tax reform and fiscal responsibility. I was disappointed we did not address how to slow the growth of property tax.

In this legislative wrap-up, I will highlight some of the issues I focused on this year. But if there is a bill or issue you would like more information on, please feel free to call my district office at (509) 684-7355. In the meantime, I look forward to seeing you around the district.

Sincerely,

Joel Kretz



### **Inside:**

- The supplemental budget
- Reinstating Initiative 747
- "Cougar Bill" signed
- Yukon to Yellowstone  
Eco-Region (Y2Y) bill dies
- Engine size tax proposal

## Supplemental budget sets us up for tax hikes

This year's budget piled on more spending and punted a long list of "to dos" until 2009. Unfortunately, with \$8.7 billion in new spending – almost a 34 percent increase since 2005 – state budget writers set the stage for a \$2.4 billion shortfall next year according to nonpartisan budget staff.

I believe government can't control taxes if it doesn't control spending. Just like we must prioritize our family budget, the state should do the same. The supplemental operating budget:

- Adds \$306 million to the 2007-09 state operating budget;
- Increases spending at a rate of 16.2 percent for the two-year budget, but state revenue is only growing at 7.3 percent;
- Increases total spending for the 2007-09 biennium to \$33.7 billion, with only \$32 billion of projected revenue – creating a large shortfall even if the economy stays strong;
- Was released on a Wednesday, and voted off the House floor just one day later. This did not allow citizens or legislators enough time to fully review the budget before it was passed.

The families of this state deserve a government that is responsive and responsible. I believe Washington leaders should go back to the priorities of government approach and spend within its means.



which is about one-third of every homeowner's tax bill. It would have left in place the portion of property tax that pays for education.

Unfortunately, this measure didn't receive a hearing. I will continue to work on and support legislation to ease the tax burden on hard-working families.

## Regulatory assistance bill stalls in Senate

This state is greatly over-regulated, but I'm working to change it. It's an uphill battle despite bipartisan support for legislation I co-sponsored this year to jump-start the state Office of Regulatory Assistance. My Democrat co-sponsor and I worked hard to craft a bill that helps businesses and individuals navigate the maze of state agency red tape and regulations.



House Bill 2631 would have set up "one-stop shopping" to find out what permits businesses need, how much the permits cost and how long the process will take. The goal was to create an understandable framework of what's involved for projects and one place for all the information.

This bill would have been a good start to changing the culture of state government. State agencies should be focused on serving the citizens of the state, not the other way around. I will continue to fight for this service.



## Reinstating I-747's property tax protection

In a special legislative session last November, I supported reinstating Initiative 747. The measure prohibits taxing districts from increasing their tax levies (property taxes) by more than 1 percent annually without voter approval.

This was a good step to slow the growing property tax burden families are facing, but I believe we could have done more during the 2008 legislative session. I proposed House Bill 3353 that would have eliminated the state portion of the property tax,



## 'Cougar bill' signed by governor

After hard-fought negotiations, the "cougar bill" I sponsored this year was signed into law. House Bill 2438 extends the cougar-hunting-with-hounds pilot project through 2011. It also allows other counties that can prove predator problems to opt into the program.

I personally want to thank 7<sup>th</sup> District constituents for helping to pass this bill. Even when the bill was delivered to the governor, thousands of calls from citizens around the state flooded her office urging her to sign the bill. I'm glad my fellow legislators and the governor were convinced that this bill is a critical public safety issue in our state.



# State Representative Joel Kretz



**Rep. Joel Kretz testifies before the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee during the hearing on the cougar bill.**

## 7<sup>th</sup> District residents reject wildlife corridor proposal

Another bill many of you were actively involved with this year was Senate Bill 5318. This bill would have created a massive wildlife corridor known as the Yukon to Yellowstone Eco-Region (Y2Y). Under the bill, a 2,000-mile-long corridor would have been created that would include the entire 7<sup>th</sup> District, most of Idaho and much of Montana.



The legislation, while only two pages, didn't address the potential for new and burdensome land use regulations and property rights restrictions the corridor may create. Under the bill, compliance would have been voluntary for now, but we all know where it's leading!

International and out-of-state environmental groups supporting the legislation had not even met with local community members or leaders to discuss the Y2Y plan or solicit feedback. Instead, they supported passing the bill now, and talking about the ramifications later. This downtown Seattle legislation basically tells 7th District residents that they know what's best for us. I support land use decisions being made at the local level, which would not happen under the Y2Y legislation.

The bill died this year, but the sponsor has made it clear he plans to introduce it again next year. I'll keep you informed as the 2009 legislative session gets closer.

## Engine-size tax proposed

I don't think I've ever received more constituent feedback on a single bill more than I did for Senate Bill 6900.

The bill would penalize people for having a larger vehicle (such as a van or truck) by increasing car tab fees exponentially. Supporters of the bill say the added costs to register large-engine vehicles will discourage folks from owning them and reduce emissions. This is part of the climate change agenda.



Here's an example of costs under the bill: A typical local family that drives a minivan, which has a three-liter engine, would be taxed an additional \$225 a year to register it. If we apply this to the 7<sup>th</sup> District, where families tend to have a utility vehicle as well, the cost to register the family van and work truck could cost \$825 a year.

I would never support this or any bill like it. These are the worst types of taxes because they hit our middle-, low- and fixed-income families the hardest. Families are already struggling to keep up with the rising costs of property taxes, health care, groceries and gas. The thought of the state imposing another enormous tax burden is appalling.

This is the rate schedule from the bill:

| Engine Size (liters) | Rate Schedule |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Up to 1.9            | \$0           |
| 2.0 - 2.9            | \$70          |
| 3.0 - 3.9            | \$225         |
| 4.0 - 4.9            | \$275         |
| 5.0 - 5.9            | \$325         |
| 6.0 - 7.9            | \$400         |
| 8.0 or over          | \$600         |

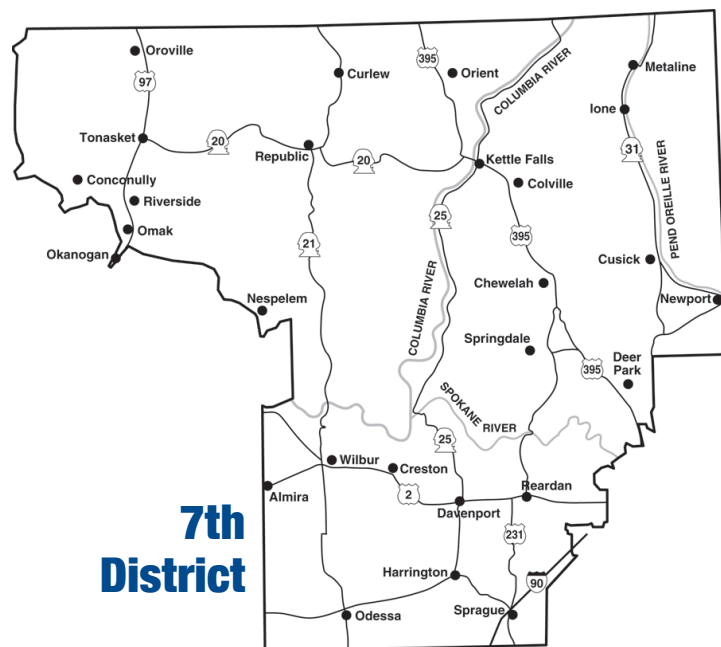
# 2008 Legislative Review

## Farewell to Rep. Bob Sump

My seatmate and friend, Rep. Bob Sump, served his last term in the state House of Representatives. He will retire from the Legislature in December when his term expires.

I will miss his mentorship and his friendship. He served the 7<sup>th</sup> District well. Rep. Sump always served as the model of integrity and honesty. Both sides of the aisle praised him for his unwavering dedication to making the state a better place.

I know we all wish him well as he takes time to be with his wife, Brenda, pursue his love of the ministry and to be a grandfather to his four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



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